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A Reading Program for Gifted Students in the Senior High School.

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A reading program for the intellectually gifted high school student must have an individualized, challenging approach that will enlarge the students range of interests, knowledge, and ideas. It should supplement his assigned classes, yet provide freedom of personal choice. It should offer an opportunity for group discussion among peers. The teacher should be an enthusiastic, gifted person who can guide the student in social and intellectual growth and who can encourage an appreciation of reading that will motivate the student to assume personal responsibility for a continuing program. However, to be successful, such a program must have the support of the school's administration, counselors, and teachers. (BS)

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A Reading Program for Gifted Students in the Senior High School

Topic of Meeting: Reading for the Gifted

Time 3:00 - 4:00 P. M.

Date: Thursday, April 25, 1968

A reading program for the intellectually gifted student must be wide enough in scope and flexible enough in programming to be of value to the individual. It must be formed for each student individually, and it must be planned so that each pupil will benefit from it.

In a reading program of this nature, each student must assume the opportunity, responsibility, and initiative in developing and evaluating the program. The teacher, in this instance should only be the guide and

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advisor in directing, channeling, and aiding each student to prepare a course of study in reading that will not only widen his scope of interests and accelerate his speed of reading, but it should be useful as a means of developing each pupil's creative powers, his critical aplomb, and his analytical thinking.

A worthwhile reading program for the gifted student must help this individual to enlarge his range of interests, knowledge, and ideas. The program that would be of interest and value to this type of student should be supplemental to his assigned classes. In this way reading will become more meaningful and vital.

High school gifted students must not be grouped in one reading class. At this age the student's interests are becoming more varied and more positive. It is most important that this variance is encouraged and developed.

Because of the gifted pupil's unusual abilities, variety of interests, and colossal intellectual curiosity, the reading program must satisfy each individual. The program must be extensive enough to interest and satisfy the quick learning ability of the gifted student. It must aim to stimulate and increase his natural search and quest for knowledge. In other words, a reading program for the intellectually advantaged student must constantly challenge him mentally.

A reading program for the high school gifted student must drastically differ from the conventional characteristics of the average reading program. This course of study must appeal to the gifted student because it is challenging, flexible, and broad in scope.

A reading program for the gifted high school pupil must be formed so each individual is afforded every opportunity to seek, and search, and find.

Each student must be given the freedom to advance his particular interests, to use initiative and originality in projects, and never to be thwarted in his further search of ideas and knowledge. With such a program the gifted student will learn to draw conclusions, form opinions, and develop, in general, a more mature way of thinking.

To be able to challenge the superior student in a reading program, it is necessary that the instructor know and understand as much as possible about each pupil. He must make a thorough study of each student's attitude toward school, home, and friends. The teacher must try to know the pupil's ambitions, hobbies, and his thought process. With this information a reading teacher is in a better position to guide and channel a reading program for the individual. The teacher will be better able to guide and direct the gifted child toward the fulfillment of his ambitions and aspirations.

Reading teachers of the gifted student must be well informed and interested in local and world affairs. The teacher should be skillful in presenting reading materials to the pupils. At all times the pupils should respect and admire the reading teacher for his ability as an instructor and for his knowledge of books and their contents.

The gifted student suffers the stress and pressure of the adolescent years as greatly, and perhaps even more severely, as does the average teenager. He experiences the same emotional, moral, and social demands as any other person his age. This gifted pupil needs guidance, encouragement, and counseling - as does his peers. Often a gifted student will be a loner or a recluse from his classmates because of his superior mind. Many times he is ridiculed and made to feel an outcast from his fellow students. This is brought about by other students who are resentful of his intellectual

advantages. Because of the gifted one's ability and alertness to learn and his eagerness to express his knowledge, he makes himself unpopular in the eyes of the less talented student. It is true that many times a superior student will not be well adjusted socially. This can be caused by his very intense love of books and learning, his lack of interest in activities of his fellow students, ^{and} his interest in hobbies and activities far beyond his years. A gifted child may segregate himself from his classmates. He is an intellectual success, but he is a social drop-out.

How can a reading program appeal and help this type of gifted but mal-adjusted student? First it can introduce to him the pleasure of leisure reading. It presents him with the opportunity to read for enjoyment, to read for fun only, and to know that as he is reading it will not be necessary to take a test or write a book report when he has completed the reading material.

Here is where the alert teacher will be able to guide the reading of the individual. The teacher can help the individual student choose books that will channel his interests into new fields. Through the reading program a student may become more relaxed. He is tense about facts and data, and this reading program could greatly aid the accelerated student to broaden his viewpoint and scope of interest.

The reading program should never allow the gifted child to become so engrossed in books that he cuts himself off from his fellow students and from reality. This type of pupil will benefit greatly by being able to share his reading experiences with others in his group. It is possible to form discussion groups of three to five individuals. In these groups each one can discuss his reading and his opinions of what he has read.

Others in the group should question or give opinions of the material, also. In forming these discussion groups, the alert teacher should assign people of varied interests to meet together. In this way new horizons will be open to the participants. A gifted student enjoys talking, and he is anxious to express his opinions. A book discussion group affords him the opportunity to relate and discuss his readings. It also gives him the chance to quote or read passages orally to his group. A gifted student tends to give the impression that he is self-sufficient. However, on the most part, he needs and seeks personal experiences of sharing ideas with others. One of the outstanding characteristics of a superior, intelligent pupil is his sense of fairness and sense of humor.

A discussion group where students are expressing personal opinions is a perfect forum for the gifted one to display his humor and his fairness in accepting the idea of others. It is vastly important that the advantaged student show his knowledge gained from books. There are many outlets for this sharing besides the discussion groups. Panel discussions, tape recordings, and dramatization of materials read are other ways for a student to impart his reading knowledge. The project of sharing materials read may also be subject matter for the superior student. He can display his initiative by forming new concepts of communicating to others the materials he has read.

The gifted student should be trained to discuss, state his views, and to be able to support his ideas. This type of student does not need as much detailed instruction because of his alert mind. However, he does need guidance about seeking and finding materials, about locating needed information, and about reviewing and reporting these findings.

Because of the many demands on the time of the pupil, a reading program should be planned with flexibility. Often times no particular schedule need be followed. The student could arrange to go to the reading center either before or after school or during the school day, if possible.

This reading program should definitely be formed with the idea that the student is working not for a credit or grade but for an individual achievement.

This type of program may be adopted by the small or large school. In the small school, ingenuity on the part of a creative teacher can greatly compensate for the lack of reading equipment and books.

A reading specialist, consultant, or reading teacher is not available in all schools, and this problem may easily be solved by starting the reading program with a creative teacher who is best qualified for this project. Without training in the reading field, the qualifications should be a teacher who is both willing and enthusiastic about teaching. It is a true fact, that the teacher determines the interest, progress, and success of any class. It is most important for the advancement of the reading program, that a superior teacher be appointed in charge of superior students.

It must be understood that just as all students do not learn with the same speed and accuracy, and not all students show the same level of interest in learning - so it is with a gifted student's speed, accuracy and interest in reading. If a student displays an apathetic attitude towards books, then the teacher must overcome this attitude, before the student will enjoy or make progress in the reading program.

This is possible by singling out the indifferent reader and engaging him in challenging conversation either on his favorite sport or hobby. Often a teacher can feign ignorance but interest in a subject matter in

order to give the student an opportunity to explain or discuss a point. The teacher should make every effort to enrich the reading program for this type of student. If he learns to enjoy reading, then he will have more depth in his educational program and more opportunity to express himself and make a greater contribution to the group through his discussions.

It is the job of the teacher to encourage, motivate and challenge the enthusiasm and interest of the talented pupil. When the natural curiosity is awakened, the intellectually inquisitive student will quickly advance in reading, if guided. On his own initiative, he will seek out additional reading materials and present this new information to the other students.

Obtaining and distributing an abundant supply of challenging, pertinent reading material often is a problem, especially, in small schools and rural communities that do not have access to libraries other than the schools. Even though procuring reading material may be difficult, the teacher should not assume full responsibility for solving this dilemma. It is just such a situation that may be used to stimulate and develop the gifted child's ingenuity. The problem of obtaining additional reading material can become a project in which all the gifted students are responsible along with the teacher. Book drives, fund drives for additional money for books, circulation of material available, contacting by mail various government, national and international organizations for literature in particular fields -- all of these aspects of finding and obtaining additional reading material may be employed. The more ingenious a student is - the more rewarding the results will be.

The gifted student under the teacher's supervision may play an active roll in mobilizing community reading resources. He may appeal to civic, religious, and social groups to solicit their help in obtaining more school reading material.

The reading teacher should not be completely responsible for the continuation of this project. However, he may be the advisor and guide in the formulation of plans. Such interest on the part of the teacher clearly demonstrates his compassion and ambition for the superior student's reading program. It also demonstrates the teacher's roll as a leader who is interested in the furtherment of the student's opportunities, abilities, and efforts.

The reading teacher to be able to guide, advise, and lead his students to higher planes of reading level and ability must always be cognizant of the various social, school, and home pressures which the superior student faces. The instructor must never forget that each student is an individual and each individual faces and solves his problems differently.

The teacher to be respected must always treat all students and situations in a democratic and fair manner. In this way the teacher will be a model of honesty and democracy for these perceptive and gifted students. The teacher's action will be a guide for his students in fairness and leadership.

For the success of the reading program and for the benefit of the students, the teacher must train and guide each student to assume the responsibility for his own reading progress. This should be accomplished by the type and amount of materials being read by the pupil. With

this as a guide, a teacher may develop a reading program that will guide and aid in the student's emotional and intellectual development.

For the complete success of a reading program for the gifted, it is extremely important that this program have the sanction, sympathy, and cooperation of the school's administration, counselors, and teachers. The acceptance of this program by the entire staff will enable the reading teacher to work with all the teachers of the gifted students. Vocabulary and reading assignments may be correlated with the class assignments. In this way classes in the reading center will become more meaningful and useful.

If the entire faculty support and assume a personal responsibility for the success of the reading program, it will greatly encourage the importance of this project.

For the success of the project in reading, there must always be time for independent reading and time to encourage independence in the choice of materials to be read. Students should not be pushed or forced to read particular books for free reading. A wise teacher will guide the students to make choices of reading material that will broaden their opinions, increase their knowledge, and open new channels of interest. By this method of freedom in choice of books, creativity on the part of the gifted child will be greatly increased.

Books may be one of the greatest sources of influence in the life of the gifted student. Therefore, it is most important that the talented student develop a keen appreciation of books. It is necessary that the superior student be aware of the tremendous impact books will have on his life.

Many times in the life of a busy, industrious student, he does not have time to read magazines, periodicals, and newspapers. Assignments in the reading center should be planned to introduce the student to just this type of reading material. An individual pupil should be encouraged to read the daily editorials in the newspaper and to read weekly current magazines of high publication standards.

A reading program for the gifted must have several objectives to be successful. Through the reading program the student must perfect his reading skills and techniques. The student should learn how to use printed information to its best advantage. He must learn how to outline, summarize, recall and read critically. The student must acquaint himself with the available sources of reading materials, and he must learn how to use library facilities. The student must also form a deep love and appreciation of good literature.

What is the evaluation of a program of this type? The effect and success of such a program is often difficult to measure. If the academically advantaged student is given greater opportunity to strengthen his educational experiences, to improve his reading techniques, to broaden his knowledge, and to further his ambitions through his assignments in these classes, then it is certain that this reading program for the gifted student in high school has been and will be successful.

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